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July 23, 2001

Dear Superintendents:

I am writing to follow-up on the discussion at the Louisiana Association of School Superintendents concerning the Regents' proposal to enact ACT's Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS) as part of our efforts to implement the recently adopted *Master Plan for Postsecondary Education: 2001*. I am pleased to report that since that time, funding for this important initiative has been secured, and authority has been received, to immediately begin enlisting schools and districts for voluntary participation in this Fall's program.

Attached you will find a number of documents which explain EPAS and the two primary ACT assessment instruments utilized (EXPLORE in 8th grade and PLAN in 10th grade). I have also included an article which documents the tremendous success that Oklahoma has experienced since first piloting EPAS in 1993. I hope that you will agree with me that widespread adoption of this system in Louisiana offers a tremendous chance to assist in the preparation of students for the workforce and/or college.

The following facts may assist in making a decision as to whether or not to participate in this Fall's program:

- Administration of the EPAS program fulfills the requirement of ACT 1124 of 1997 (Career Options For High School Students) which requires the completion of Five Year Educational Plans by students.
- Full cost of the program is from state appropriations to the Board of Regents (see attached Memorandum of Understanding for details).
- This is NOT a high stakes test. Assessment is to be used to assist students and parents make appropriate decisions at key transition points. It is NOT part of the state's accountability program.
- The entire assessment (using EXPLORE or PLAN) takes a total of 3 hours. Date(s) for assessment are to be determined by the participating school (anytime between September 24 and December 21). Results will be reported to the schools within two to four weeks.
- Both ACT, Inc. and the Board of Regents have pledged to provide increased staff

support at the local level for professional development related to EPAS.

- Last month EPAS was endorsed by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education's Strategic Planning Committee.

Please give serious consideration to include all of your middle schools and high schools in this program. To participate, a completed and signed Memorandum of Understanding must be submitted for each school to my office no later than August 31st. If you, your principals, guidance counselors, or board members have any questions, please contact Heather Devall, EPAS Coordinator at the Regents' office, 225-342-4253.

Sincerely,

E. Joseph Savoie
Commissioner of Higher Education